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# The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

*The Way of Love* HENRY STOB

*The Image of the Church and Evangelism* J. D. EPPINGA

*The New Canadians and the C.R.C.* HERMAN RIDDERBOS

*"I Wrote the Last Gospel"* JOHN CALVIN REID

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*Understanding and Creating* WILLIAM M. WIEBENGA

*Editorials on the idea of Neutrality and on the Organizational Man*

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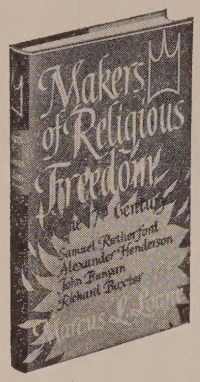


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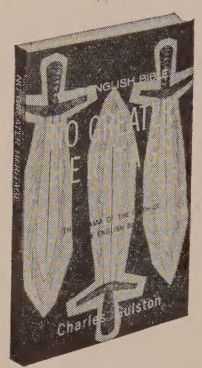


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## *In This Issue*

In the first of the two short editorials, Editor Lester DeKoster suggests some of the consequences of holding to the idea that there is no neutrality possible among men, and in the second Editor James Daane suggests some of the consequences of becoming an organizational man.

Editor Henry Stob continues his discussion of what previously he has described as the Positive Mind. He does so by beginning in this issue a characterization of the way of love — the way in which the Christian ought to order the totality of his life.

The Reverend J. D. Eppinga writes a very interesting piece on the evangelistic image of the Christian Reformed Church — that image in the eyes of God, in the eyes of ourselves, in the eyes of others. He then sets forth a number of helpful suggestions how the Church might improve its efforts to evangelize.

A competent Dutch observer, Herman Ridderbos, makes a number of useful comments on the Christian Reformed community, more particularly on the place and influence in that community of the Reformed people who have in recent years emigrated from the Netherlands.

The last of John Calvin Reid's imaginative personal accounts of why the Gospels were written appears in this issue. This time the apostle John tells us how he came to write his Gospel and what he hoped it would mean to his readers.

In the second, and concluding, article on the preaching of John Calvin, Reverend Paul Zylstra again shows how strongly the great Reformer believed and practiced the truth that in the preaching of the gospel God freely offers his grace to sinners.

Mr. William M. Wiebenga continues a discussion that was begun by Nicholas Wolterstorff in the February *Journal*. The discussion concerns approaches to and aims of Christian education, especially such education as is carried on in the Reformed community. It is to be hoped that what the two writers have set forth may be only the beginning of a lively and useful discussion of what Christian education as it now exists is and what it ought to be.

# As We See It

## NO NEUTRALITY?

Ideas are said to have consequences. Professor Weaver so entitled his stimulating book.

The fact that ideas do have consequences is the teacher's burdens of human immortality. Whose were the ideas that gave form to President Kennedy's outlook and thus help govern his judgments now? Who, that is, were his *teachers?* Whose ideas will change that outlook and subsequent judgments based upon it? Who, that is, *are* his teachers? Who did the shaping for Mr. Eisenhouwer? for Mr. Dulles? for Mr. Rusk? Is it not thus that unknown, unlauded, unnoticed *teaching* of ideas works its way into the life-blood of the world? And is it not thus, then, that teachers achieve human immortality?

This fact of *consequences* makes the handling of ideas an earnest and serious business. Their consequences follow upon them. Carelessness and falsehood have their own brood of vipers.

The Soviet Union has long held an *idea,* full of consequences, which it has lately put up for export. This idea is that there is *no neutrality* possible among men. One is for Communism or against it; that is all. The theorist, the artist, the politician, the ordinary citizen is "correct" or — briefly — "incorrect," but never neutral. If there are virtues across the border, no one extols them; if there are defects within, no one observes them. Only the most powerful defy the convention and live — Khrushchev himself abused Stalin (after he was safely entombed) and Pasternak won a Nobel prize for objectivity (a prize he never could accept). But ordinarily Communism recognizes no neutrals.

So long as this denial of neutrality remained a home-bound convention, it was harmless enough outside the Soviet Union, however deadly it was within. But now the consequences have spilled over and threaten the world.

For Mr. Khrushchev has, in his doctrine of non-neutrality, discovered an inflexible weapon against international supervision of any kind, whether of nuclear development or of peace treaties and agreements. *No one,* he says, can be neutral. So *no one* can be entrusted with the inspection of atomic developments in the USA and USSR. No one can be trusted to rule objectively on cease-fire and boundary disputes. Who will guard the guardians? No neutral man is there.

The consequences of this idea are incalculable, and can only be awaited. Yet, even a half-hearted examination of the view itself, based upon some estimate of its awesome consequences, suffices to cast doubt upon this denial of neutrality. Is it true that *no* one — or, say, *no* five men — can be found in all the world neutral enough to judge impartially of nuclear developments in the USA and USSR? Do you believe this? I do not! I could foresee no hope for community life on any level — local, national, international — or family life itself if I did not believe in neutrality, a neutrality precisely opposed to Mr. Khrushchev's denial of it. If no judge could be neutral, if no administrator could be neutral, if no school superintendent or principal could be neutral, if no parent or child could be neutral, if none of us could rise above his own interests and in so doing view two sides of a question objectively and from the standpoint of neutrality — why, then no society would be possible, and none would in fact exist.

Manifestly, Mr. K. is stretching a point, one his police can enforce inside Russia but one which will not hold water around the world, though it might condemn the world to destruction if too long pursued.

But he teaches us something. It is that ideas must be handled with care, for they are explosive in their consequences.

And all this is pertinent to us because the idea of non-neutrality in various forms — in epistemology, in logic, in social and economic and political organization — is bandied about among us too. It is easily enunciated, superficially attractive, and impossible to live out. The sudden public accession of Mr. K. as one of its adherents in a form of his own may dampen a little the enthusiasm it arouses — not only because Mr. K. is bad company to have to share but because his holding the same idea must be theoretically embarrassing. That is, if an atheist insists upon non-neutrality, and if a theist does the same, then the atheist and the theist *do* have at least one idea in common: the idea, in this case, that there is no neutrality. But in this idea, then, *they have found neutrality*. Circumscribe what they hold in common as we may, they *share* one idea. It is, in short, their *neutral* territory. But if this is so, what has become of the idea of non-neutrality itself? As they assert it, they so deny it. And to try to live out of it, were that possible, would be fraught with all the dangerous consequences an error is bound to bring forth.

In this cannot Mr. Khrushchev be inadvertently our teacher? —L.D.K.

# THE ORGANIZATIONAL MAN

Adolph Eichmann is a frightening but apt example of the "organizational man," a man who hands over his conscience to an organization and then with loyalty devoid of moral feeling does whatever the organization tells him to do. Having committed moral suicide by handing over his conscience to the Nazi political organization, he could obediently and without moral pain accept the party's directive to destroy millions of Jewish men, women, and children. Quite consistently with his act of moral abdication, he now feels no guilt and assumes no moral responsibility for attempting to extinguish the Jewish race by sending millions of them to the gas chambers.

Today the world stands aghast at Eichmann's moral insensitivity. Among them are numerous "organizational men" in all walks of life who themselves have allowed organizations and institutions to be their conscience and regard their unqualified loyalty to such institutions as virtuous. Although the consequences were far less frightful, the moral abdication of some executives of large American electrical corporations who controlled prices, eliminated competition, and rigged bids, because of the demands of corporation interests, differs only from Eichmann's in that the consequences were less frightening. The initial act of allowing an organization to be one's conscience was in each case the same. Their greatest evil lies not in the actions for which they are on trial, but rather in willingness to permit an organization to decide for them what is right and what wrong.

Nothing is more immoral, not even dishonesty or murder, than the act which seeks to escape the demands of morality by allowing something else — a political, business, or ecclesiastical organization — to be one's conscience. Billy Graham revealed a profound sensitivity to the demands of Christian ethics when he recently asserted that the greatest thing that could happen to the cause of Christianity was not the conversion of Khrushchev but a return to integrity. Socrates was willing to follow his conscience even if it meant death for himself. Eichmann was willing to hand in his conscience to a political organization even if that meant the death of millions of others.

Neither Eichmann, nor the American executives, are thieves or murderers in the ordinary sense of the terms. It is doubtful that Eichmann ever killed anyone either before or after his Jewish assignment. Nor would the executives steal your wallet if they had the opportunity. Yet each could fall into these evils since they had first committed the greater evil, personal moral abdication and the transference of their conscience to an organization. Once this had happened, anything could happen in the name of loyalty to the party or institution.

Although the world stands aghast at Eichmann, and Christendom pays its respect to the moral integrity of Socrates the "glorious pagan," how often Christian people and Christian churches commit their moral conscience to a larger ecclesiastical organization. Again, it is not that such people and churches are sinful in the ordinary sense of the term. The matter is far worse: they morally abdicate by surrendering their conscience to an organization.

Let us eschew organizationalism and refuse to become the "organizational man." Let us cling rather to the Reformation principle that "God alone is the lord of the conscience," and to Article 31 of our Church Order which recognizes the right of the individual conscience and the principle that in the case of moral conflict both the individual and the Church must recognize and honor the right of each to act before God. Had Eichmann governed his conduct by the principle of Article 31, or by the Reformation principle that "God alone is the lord of the conscience," he would rather have died than do what he did. But accept the principle that an organization may function as the conscience for the individual, then neither the Western world nor the Jews themselves have a case against Eichmann. J.D.

# *The Way of Love*

*by Henry Stob*

IN THE MARCH ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL I HAZARDED a sketch of the Positive Mind as it appears in the context of the Safe and Militant Minds. The emphasis there lay on the relations it sustains to differing mentalities and on the way it interacts with these within the confines of the Church. A discussion so accented can of course carry one only a little way into an understanding of what the Positive Mind in essence is. No account of mere relations and interactions can disclose the heart and core of Positivity. The reason for this is general and obvious. Everything is in its substance something other than the relations it sustains, and so too is the Positive Mind. It has its own nature, and this is prior to its functioning. No doubt its outlines are sharpened in its interaction with other Minds, so that by its contact with these a clearer image of it is evoked, but it itself is not constituted in and through these interactions. Its essential form derives from its own inner principle, the principle of Love. Because a proper understanding of this principle is prerequisite for a knowledge and appraisal of what is meant by Positivity, I shall in in this article make an approach to a brief and schematic characterization of it. For want of current space, however, the characterization itself must wait for the appearance of another issue of the *Journal*.

I undertake this project with some hesitancy because I am aware that the world is full of books on love. From the time of Homer onwards, not to speak of Moses, men have been writing on this theme, and usually very ably. Contemporary authors have been particularly prolific. It seems gratuitous therefore, if not presumptuous, to add even a little to the existing literature. If nevertheless I do it, it is for three reasons. First, because many of the available accounts are uninformed by Christian insights and are therefore mistaken or misleading. Second, because the good accounts are not accessible to everyone and are in any case not usually oriented to the special problems and preoccupations of our communion. Third and most relevantly, because one who commends the Positive Mind of Love owes it to his fellows to declare precisely what it is he is commending, for the word "love" is nothing if not ambiguous. It means different things to different people, and different things to the same people in different contexts. One who wishes to communicate is obliged therefore to untangle these meanings and indicate which one it is he intends to sponsor. Clarification of this sort is hardly ever a work of supererogation and is perhaps a demand of love itself.

This being so I shall proceed in spite of my feeling that he who writes on love is giving hostages to fortune. Of love the good people of our day have heard and seen enough; they want no more of it. They see it advertised in the papers, exploited in the magazines, emblazoned on the television screen and in the movies, exhibited on shady streets, and everywhere degraded. And when they go to Christian churches they hear of it again, and it turns out in the pulpits of some of these to be a soft and pusillanimous thing unfit for stern and righteous men, especially rock-ribbed Calvinists. The result of this is weariness with love and even some contempt for it. It seems that if love does not mean sex it means weak sentimentality. In any case it is suspect. The word has been so hollowed out that to use it in serious discourse is, if not impossible, then very hazardous, for one runs the risk of not being listened to at all, or if listened to, then misunderstood.

WHAT IS ONE TO DO IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS? To cease to talk of the thing called love is christianly impossible; yet to use the word "love" is to engender impatience and sometimes puzzlement. It is hardly possible to do in English what the Apostles did in Greek when faced with a similar problem. Compelled to speak of love but finding the common word for it filled with pagan connotations they reached deep into the Greek vocabulary and picked out a little-used word easily emptied of its meaning and poured their Christian message into it. In this way *Agape* came to replace *Eros* in the Scriptures. But what is to replace "love" in our English speech? "Charity" will not do, for though it once did good service in communicating Christian insights, it suggests to contemporary man little more than alms-giving. "Benevolence" is in no better case, connoting as it does something akin to patronage. To solve the problem there has been a general return in Christian circles to "agape," which under the circumstances seems to be the best expedient, though its employment strikes some people as pedantic. Short of this one can only continue to use "love" and hope by steadfastly keeping its reference pure to restore its terminological usefulness.

In any case the talk about love may not be abandoned, for love is the central idea in Christian ethics. The "Christian Way," in the context of morality, is quite simply the "Way of Love." Love describes

the way in which the Christian ought to order the totality of his life. In the perfect Christian, love is the law that governs him, the spirit that animates him, the impulse which motivates him. In love all the commandments are fulfilled. For this the Scripture is warrant.

> And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, trying him: Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth and the prophets (Mt. 22:35ff.; cf. Deut. 6:4, 5; Lev. 19:18).
>
> Owe no man anything, save to love one another; for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law (Rom. 13:8).
>
> For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Gal. 5:14).

By these authoritative words a central place is claimed for love, and they are but representative of many more of similar import. Love is at the heart of Christianity and it must be proclaimed as central as long as the Church endures.

IT MUST NOT BE SUPPOSED, OF COURSE, THAT LOVE made its first entrance with the inauguration of the Christian Church. What is commonly called by this name was in the world long before the Lord appeared. There has always been, even in areas unsanctified by special grace, the love of young men for fair maidens, the love of mothers for their children, the love of friends for one another, the love of the pious for the gods, and the love of all men for themselves. Love as such is universal. The word stands in the vocabulary of all peoples, and there has never been a culture that has not felt its forming power. It is native to every individual and from no one is it ever altogether absent. The Lord has laid it in the heart of all, and He has maintained it there in order that by it courtship and family life, friendship and society may continue to the end of days. That it has been perverted and misdirected through the fall and corruption of mankind is, of course, true. But it has never been abolished, nor will it be before the Judgment, for it is the very bond and cement of communal life. Only in hell, as C. S. Lewis vividly shows in his engaging phantasy *The Great Divorce,* will the divisive force of hate abolish love and drive people so asunder that an infinite distance separates them forever from their fellows.

This is not to say that there is nothing unique in the Christian doctrine of love, or that all men love the things a Christian loves, with a Christian love. On the contrary, it is my chief concern to say not only that the Christian loves some objects which the non-Christian does not love at all, but also the very love with which the Christian loves is wanting in the man untouched by grace. The latter loves indeed, but neither his love nor its real objects are like those of the man in Christ.

St. Augustine sensed this when, contrasting the Christian and the non-Christian, he found the difference between them to consist not in the opposition of love to hate, but in the opposition of two loves.

> Two loves make up two cities: love of God maketh Jerusalem, love of the world maketh Babylon. Wherefore let each one question himself as to what he loveth; and he shall find of which he is a citizen (Ps. LXIV, 2).
>
> There are two kinds of love; of these the one is holy, the other impure; the one is social, the other selfish; . . . the one wishing for the neighbor what it would wish for itself, the other wishing to subject the very neighbor to itself; the one guiding the neighbor in the interest of the neighbor's good, the other in that of its own. . . . These two kinds of love distinguish the two cities established in the human race (*De Gen. ad Litt.* XI, xv, 20).

So far as these words go, Augustine is clearly right. He correctly sees that though love is universal it is by no means exercised on identical objects, and he also sees that love, of whatever kind, is the fashioner of Cities, i.e. of Societies, Cultures, or Communities — communities or civilizations that bear the unmistakable impress of the love that fashioned them. What is not always as clear in St. Augustine as it might be is that Christian love differs from the other sort not only in respect of the objects upon which it is spent, but also in its very nature or essential constitution. Augustine frequently turns to Christian ends the kind of love developed in Greek philosophical reflection rather than the kind elaborated in the New Testament revelation, but in this he was but reflecting his incomplete separation from his earlier Neo-Platonism. To us who stand upon Augustine's shoulders it is somewhat clearer than it was to him that there is an important difference between the merely natural love of man and the supernatural love revealed in Christ and communicated to those who are joined to Him.

THE WORLD THAT CHRISTIANITY ENTERED WAS A world in which people loved as well as hated. Indeed, their hates were but the shadow sides of the loves they exercised. It is probable that this is always so, one always hating only that which is the contrary or the contradiction of what one loves. Hate has apparently no independent status, being definable only in terms of some possible love it negates. By this token love is primary, the very precondition for whatever hate there is. In any case love, like religion, was very much in evidence in the world to which the Apostles preached. This fact deserves attention for it throws light upon the nature of the

confrontation that took place between Christianity and the Graeco-Roman world.

It indicates, for one thing, that it was not the mere *possession* of love as such that Christianity enjoined upon the world. Christianity upset the world it entered, but it could hardly have disturbed it if it had demanded nothing more than that people should *have* love. The demand would not have been regarded as either very radical or very burdensome. People would have felt, indeed, that the demand had been met even before it had been stated; in the face of it they could have pointed with justified complacency to their existing loves.

Nor would this complacency have been shattered if the Apostles' call for love had only been a call to *intensify* the loves already owned and exercised. There is no lover who is not willing finally to be told that he must increase his love, for this is very dear to him and the more of it he has the better. A demand for more fervency or constancy in the normal patterns of pagan love could therefore not have operated so revolutionarily as in fact the Gospel did.

Nor could the world have been turned upside down by that same Gospel if there had been no more in Christianity than a demand for a change in the *objects* of men's love. There was, of course, just such a demand. Instead of idols and unknown gods, the God of Abraham and the Father of Jesus Christ was to be loved, and this disturbed the pagan. Also, instead of self the neighbor was to occupy the center of the human stage, and this demand was significant enough to cause concern. But may we suppose that these are the only shifts the Gospel required the natural man to make, and can we account for its shattering force in terms of this demand alone? The pagan was religious, and in the religion purified by philosophic criticism he aspired after divine perfection, being controlled by a most passionate love for supersensuous and unchangeable realities. Did Christianity endorse this love and only redirect it toward another object? And as for neighbor-love, there was much of it in pagan life, as we have seen. What revolutionary thing had Christianity to propose in face of this? There is certainly no suggestion in the Gospel that courtship should be abandoned, that parents should cease to love their children, that exclusive friendships should be broken up, or even that love for self should be wholly thrust aside. Are we to suppose then that Christianity required nothing more than a subtle readjustment in these various love relations, nothing more perhaps than a shift of emphasis? It would seem not. If it be remarked that Christianity made the term "neighbor" include much more than fiancee or offspring or companion or fellow citizen, nothing could be truer; but what then did it have to say to the Stoics who preached a universal brotherhood? Did not the Gospel require more, even on the horizontal level, than orientation to all mankind? It seems evident that it did. Though it insisted that love should be directed toward the proper objects, it insisted also that love itself should be right and true. What it opposed was not only false representations of love's objects, but also a false idea of love's essence.

What Christianity confronted when it entered the world was not only love, and quantities of love, and quantities of love partly well- and partly ill-directed, but a *doctrine* of love, a *theory* of what love is, a *conception* of love's inner nature. It was this that the Apostles centrally opposed. And they did it by declaring that there had lately been a supernatural demonstration of love's nature, a demonstration which called into question every purely natural understanding of what love is.

The steady appeal of the Apostles to revelation whenever they spoke of love requires to be duly noted. They knew, as we do since they spoke, that we are dependent for our knowledge of the deep things of men and God upon special Divine disclosures. Of these deep things love is obviously one. We do not naturally understand it; we must be told of it by God. God did tell men of it through the Prophets, and He disclosed much of it in the many mighty acts He did in and for His chosen people Israel. But He did not give the maximal exhibition of it until He delivered His only-begotten Son into death upon a cross. It was on Golgatha that love was most conspicuously revealed. And when it was revealed it was seen, by those whose vision had been supernaturally restored, to be a thing quite unlike that which the wise men of the world had extolled as love. In their intercourse with these men, and with all who in some measure shared their outlook, the Apostles therefore always pointed to the Cross, and bade men substitute for their false conceptions the true understanding of love that could only here be gained.

When Christianity entered the world, then, two notions of love stood in opposition to each other. The conflict between them was deep and radical, and the pagan resistance to the Christian disclosure was intense. When by the power of the Holy Spirit this resistance was broken down, however, a veritable revolution took place in men's perspectives, for the Christian truth when operative turned men's thoughts of love around. The thoughts which were thus revolutionized had been hammered out in the schools of Greek philosophy, and their chief architect was Plato. To a Christian they are no longer a live option; but to grasp what Christian love is, no better way suggests itself than that of seeing it against the background of this pagan understanding.

For this purpose recourse must be had to two

Greek words which we are able to translate into English only by the single word "love," a circumstance which tempts us to confuse two kinds of love which we ought clearly to distinguish. These Greek words are *Eros* and *Agape*, two words by which the whole contrast between ancient Paganism and Christianity is summarily expressed.

It is therefore in contrast to Pagan *Eros* that I wish in a succeeding article to set forth the Christian *Agape*, hoping that in this way there will come into view two significantly different conceptions of human existence, one of which, if it is to be saved at all requires redemption by the Divine *Agape* of the Christian revelation. In this way, too, a better insight will be afforded, it is hoped, into the nature and claims of the Positive Christian Mind.

# The Image of the Church and Evangelism

*by J. D. Eppinga*

NO DOUBT WE HAVE ALL ENJOYED, AT ONE TIME OR another, the famous breakfast-table essays of Oliver Wendell Holmes. In one of them he tells of John who sits at the breakfast table with Tom. "Now," says Holmes, "notice that at that table there are at least three Toms. There is the Tom that John sees. There is the Tom that God sees. And finally, there is the ideal Tom as seen in Tom's own mind. All three are very real persons, but which one is really Tom?"

What is true of Tom is also, of course, true of John. There is the John Tom sees. There is the John God sees. And finally, there is the ideal John as seen by John himself. Again, all three are very real persons, but which one is really John?

I shall not in this article attempt a discussion of the image of the church at large — though this is, of course, a most worthy subject, and more important for consideration today than ever before. Indeed, much is being written on this subject in books, and even in the secular magazines of the day. Only recently articles have appeared in *Time* and other magazines, dealing with "The Organizational Church," "The Church in Suburbia," "The Church's Great Identification with the Middle Class," "The Fractured Church and Foreign Missions" — all topics which we recognize as dealing with the image of the church at large. However, important as this subject may be, I shall in this article delimit the subject to "The Evangelistic Image of the Christian Reformed Denomination."

But immediately we must ask: "Image — in whose sight? Image — in whose eyes?" At Holmes's breakfast table there are at least three Toms. So, too, there is more than one evangelistic image of our denomination. There is the image as we see it. There is the image as God sees it. And there is the image as others see it. All of these images cannot be accurate. Nevertheless, all are real.

We say that all of these images cannot be accurate. But surely one is, and that is the one as seen by God. When Holmes at his breakfast table asks, "Which one is the real Tom," we can answer, "The Tom God sees." Similarly we can answer the question "What is the real evangelistic image of the Christian Reformed denomination?" by saying that it is the image as seen by God. And let us remind ourselves at once that it is this image that must be our greatest concern. That this is not always our greatest, or should we say first, concern is rather easily demonstrated. We have only to ask ourselves the question: "What was our first thought on seeing the subject presently under discussion — 'The Image of the Church and Evangelism'?" Was it not the thought of how we appear to "others?" You see, we often think of "others" in this connection before we think of God. In personal life, what "others" think and say often motivates the things we do or leave undone. "Public Opinion" is a powerful god. Thus there is the temptation to render it homage, not only in our personal, but also in our ecclesiastical life. We enjoy being well spoken of. Thus many a church has sought to project a favorable image in its evangelistic efforts, and it has done so in great disregard of what ought always to be a prior consideration, namely, the casting of a favorable evangelistic image in the sight of heaven.

There is a further consideration here that merits elucidation simply because it is so Biblical. It is to say that the more favorable our evangelistic image is in the eyes of God, the more unfavorable that image will be in the eyes of the world. If there is such a thing as an antithesis, then this is fact. And a fact it is. The Gospel is an offense. It is an affront. And when it is no longer an

ffense, then it may seriously be asked whether is still the Gospel — all of which is another ay of saying the reverse of the second sen- ence of this paragraph, to wit, that the more avorable our evangelistic image is in the eyes of he world, the more unfavorable that image will e in the sight of God. It is well perhaps to re- ind ourselves of this basic fact. We cannot serve oth God and Mammon — this is true in our evan- elistic efforts, too. We cannot be men-pleasers and od-pleasers at one and the same time. We can be either-or," but not "both-and." Indeed, the history f the Christian church has unfailingly proved hat those who have attempted the latter alternative ave pleased neither men nor God. And they have ost the Gospel!

With the above remarks serving as background, e can proceed along the lines already suggested to ur minds.

*he Evangelistic Image of the Christian Reformed enomination — in the Eyes of God*

It goes entirely without saying that our evan- elistic image in God's sight is not known to us. ot one of us would dare to say that it is perfect. r even that it is good. What should be added, owever, is the thought that although we do not now what our image is in God's eyes, we do know hat it ought to be. We have His Word. The New estament is especially helpful in this regard. We ave the example and the words of Christ which, ogether with the Acts of the Apostles and the pistles, give us all we need to know. We have uch words as, *koinonia* — fellowship based on love o Christ, *kerygma* — the proclamation of the mes- age of salvation, *diakonia* — the ministry of serv- ce, *ekklesia* — the assembly called out for worship, nd many others, to explore. We have the Great ommission, and underneath it all, the new com- nandment of love — from all of which we may ashion the evangelistic image of the Christian eformed denomination in the sight of God as it ught to be.

Faithfully exploring God's Book from the stand- oint of our subject, then, can lead us to but one onclusion. It is to say that our earlier statement, amely, that our evangelistic image in His sight s not what it ought to be, is probably the greatest nderstatement of this article. The church in the ook of Acts was very far from perfect — in regard o its evangelistic image too. Yet with that im- erfect church we do not even bear comparison.

It is true that doctrinally we have attained unto iblical formulations such as the early Christians id not have, nor could be expected to have. In this ense we have made great progress. Yet when it omes to missionary zeal and the evangelistic image, t is a humbling experience to make a comparison between the church in the book of Acts and the Christian Reformed denomination.

The above must not be looked upon as an attempt to sell ourselves short. We have a great love for our denomination and we are grateful to God for the growth He has given, both inward and outward. Yet, a dispassionate appraisal of where we are, evangelistically speaking, and where we ought to be reveals a distance which can only be looked upon as an indictment. No doubt we are even further from the ideal than our greatest estimates born of our most humble moments.

*The Evangelistic Image of the Christian Reformed Denomination — in the Eyes of Ourselves*

There lies, of necessity, an area for discussion in this whole connection, which is common to both the previous and the present headings. Let us therefore continue the above train of thought. There are those within our communion who are much concerned with the matter of our image, or lack of image, in the sight of God. There are others of our fellow members, however, who hold a more favorable estimate of that image. And still others who, sad to say, show no concern at all and no interest. All of which reveals the fact that there is no one evangelistic image of the Christian Reformed denomination in its own eyes. A sampling of opinions, collected from knowledgeable and representative members, brought responses varying all the way from "good" to "terrible." Further questioning for the reasons for the respective responses only served to complicate the picture even more. It must herewith be stated that the poll was not very extensive nor scientific. Therefore, if polls at best have only questionable values, then perhaps this one was of no value at all. It might be interesting, however, to list the findings in brief.

Those who answered "good" to the question of "What is our Evangelistic Image?" gave as their reasons such as the following:

—It has improved considerably since the war.
—It is much better than that of the liberals.
—It is Biblical in its foundation, therefore, better than that of the Arminianizing fundamentalists.

It is to be noted that those who answered along the lines of the above, found "good" to say of our image by way of comparing it to something they considered worse. It is likewise to be noted that these answers were generally supplied by those of our members who, though rather well grounded in Reformed theology, tend to defend our church and everything Christian Reformed at all costs.

Those who answered "fair" to the question of "What is our Evangelistic Image?" gave their reasons along the following lines:

—We are emerging from our cocoon, but we still have a long way to go.

—We have a desire to witness, though it doesn't seem to be our *forte*.

—We witness, but we lack appeal.

Though we list only three samplings here, those who answered along the lines of "fair" gave the greatest variety of reasons. It must also be noted that those who by their answers placed themselves in this group were generally of two kinds, namely, those who apparently had given this question a lot of thought, and those who appeared to have given the matter almost no consideration.

Those who answered "bad" to the question of "What is our Evangelistic Image?" reasoned almost as one:

—Our doctrine of predestination is in the way.

—We should co-operate more with the fundamentalists.

—We are too doctrinal, too "Dutch," too concerned with ourselves.

It would appear that those who answered the question in this manner included not only those who might easily leave our church, but also those who have a deep sense of loyalty to our denomination. Thus, from the foregoing, it would seem that there are as many evangelistic images of our church in our own eyes as there are members; that these images do fall into general classifications; that there is a measure of truth in all of them; that we might with profit explore this whole subject a great deal further. If we are healthy in this respect, we should know it. On the other hand, if we are not, we should know that too. However, in either case greater agreement among ourselves as to our condition would seem a helpful thing if progress is to be made.

### *The Evangelistic Image of the Christian Reformed Denomination — in the Eyes of Others*

Many years ago Robert Burns wrote these famous lines:

*Ah! wad some power the giftie gie us*
*Ta see ourselves as ithers see us.*

This, however, is a most difficult thing to do. The lady who sat directly in front of Burns that day in church no doubt thought she looked quite presentable. To the poet seated behind her, however, and who saw an insect crawling on her shoulder, she presented quite another picture — and thus occasioned the famous lines. As she could not see herself as Burns saw her, so we cannot see very well our evangelistic image as others behold it to be.

We have already indicated somewhat earlier two thoughts that are relevant at this point. The first is that the world would never view anything about a true church, especially its evangelistic image, as favorable anyway. And the second is that there ought never to be such striving to enhance our appearance in the eyes of the world as will harm our evangelistic image in the eyes of God. We reassert, at this point, our adherence to these propositions.

Holding to these as we do, however, there still devolves upon us the duty to present such an evangelistic image to the world as will, humanly speaking, be most prone to win souls for Christ. It would seem to be nothing less than our responsibility in this respect to be (to use a Biblical phrase) "wise as serpents." Where can we go, then, to obtain at least something of a picture of what our evangelistic image is in the eyes of others?

It would seem best in this quest to consult our friends. I speak of Christians of other denominations. It is reasonable to assume that they would speak to us in kindness — as true friends are wont to do. However, when this procedure is followed, it is well to be prepared. For often where this technique to determine our image in the eyes of others has been employed we have met with responses that have caused us pain, confusion, and the feeling that we are greatly misunderstood. Statements such as, "You make the rest of us feel like second-class citizens in the kingdom," "You often give the impression that yours is the only church there is," "You are not relevant to the present world picture," are all opinions that become our duty to investigate. Are they true, or are they born of prejudice? And if the latter, what is the reason for the prejudice?

It has been my privilege to speak on the subject of the Christian Reformed Church in quite a few churches of other denominations in the last several years, specifically in Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Christ, and Lutheran communions. The same subject has been presented to a few service clubs and civic groups. Discussions following the presentations were in every case most revealing, even shocking. They manifested an appalling amount of misinformation. It must be observed that these meetings all took place in the Grand Rapids area where the Christian Reformed denomination is most strongly represented. In other areas of the country where may be found none, or just one outpost church of our denomination, it may be expected that our image in the eyes of others is non-existent, or at best, weak. For example, in my first charge, which was considered an outpost church, there was the constant question of, "Who or what is the Christian Reformed Church?" This situation, however, does not obtain in Kent County, where our representation is strong. And so we find that we do register a rather definite image in the eyes of others.

What is it? To answer this, let us list a few of the questions and observations elicited in the meetings referred to above, all held in other churches:

—How is it that you do not believe in insurance?

—Why can't your children play with other children?

—Most of the people on my block are Christian Reformed. They make me feel like an outsider.

—We find your emphasis on election and predestination difficult to understand or even tolerate.

—What have you got against the Sunday paper?

—The reason our United Fund campaigns fall short consistently is that Christian Reformed people, though they give well to their own causes, have no sense of community responsibility.

—Is it necessary to be "Dutch" to be a member of your church?

—You have a strong stand on Sabbath observance, but I know some Christian Reformed people who buy from me every Sunday.

In every experience, the discussion periods went overtime with mutual consent. In every case, there was at least one comment that we ought to have more such meetings to increase interdenominational understanding. However, the point to be made at present is that these were real questions (they are not manufactured) asked by our neighbors. Some of the questions reveal prejudice. Others reveal misinformation. Yet, whatever they show, this is certain, namely, that by hearing them something is revealed to us as to what our image (evangelistic image, too) is in the eyes of others. The picture is not an encouraging one. Somewhere along the line we have neglected what every other major denominational body (and many minor ones), and even all business concerns, consider most important, and that is the field of "public relations."

We arrive inevitably therefore at the question: "How can we improve our evangelistic image as a denomination in the eyes of others?" We must always remember that

(a) Our image in the eyes of God is the prior consideration;

(b) Our image in the eyes of the world will be negative because the Gospel is an offense.

Conceivably one might say that for reason *b* we need make no effort at all in this direction. I do not believe, however, that any of us wish seriously to entertain this idea. We agree that we must keep especially point *a* in our sight. Yet at the same time we believe that we must bend every effort to create such a climate in our communion as will not "quench the Spirit," as He uses our witness too for the ingathering of all those who are God's, and as He further uses our witness as a testimony in this world.

### *Public Relations*

To obtain an improved evangelistic image in the eyes of others is far from simple. The Christian Reformed Church must combat, among other items, its own past reputation. If it is true that we have made improvements in this whole area (an idea some would debate), such improvements are just beginnings. It has been suggested by some that we must have better bulletin boards, better signs directing the public to our churches, an increased atmosphere of hospitality for visitors to our churches, newspaper ads, and a host of similar ideas. All of this is important. It is also true that all of us have more homework to do in these basic areas. It is a fact that the atmosphere in many of our churches is cool, and strangers feel the chill. All of these matters could be subsumed under the heading of "Public Relations."

We have much to learn in this field. And the whole science of psychology lies at our disposal. The fact of the matter is, however, that little of it is used. In fact, we practice "bad" psychology very often, not purposely, but unthinkingly. Only recently I picked up a Christian Reformed publication in a public place (the downtown YMCA lounge) with this quote prominently displayed, "The Only Theology the Bible Knows — The Reformed Faith." Granting that this is true, it gives me the feeling that we must think a good deal of ourselves. Certainly such a statement as this must have an adverse effect upon many outside our communion.

### *Closer Identification Between Clergy and Laity*

This is the favorite horse of Elton Trueblood, Quaker theologian, and he rides it again and again. Within his own terms of reference, however, it is a concept we cannot altogether buy. Yet we do well within our own framework to lay a certain emphasis on this point, especially in view of the fact that the line between clergy and laity in our denomination is becoming more pronounced. This produces overtones affecting our evangelistic image.

The ministry, we believe, is not a profession. Yet a certain amount of "professionalism" atmosphere has been creeping in. There are those of our number who feel that "witnessing" is the minister's business. As a result they are doing less of it themselves. The highly institutionalized churches in our land stand in sorry contrast here with the less institutionalized. For example, the fundamentalists, and even the sects, are far more active, evangelistically speaking, on the level of the laity than are those churches where there exists a strong line of demarcation between those who occupy the pulpit and those who occupy the pew. If it is true, then, that increased church institutionalization and rank-and-file witnessing stand in inverse proportion to each other, we do well to consider our present trends. The further multiplication of ecclesiastical boards and denominational positions may well take us to an undesired destination — several giant steps

away from that grass-roots involvement in evangelism that should be, and is, the ideal. These remarks are by no means to be interpreted as a criticism of our personnel who are operative in our denominational positions. They are devoted servants of the Lord. Yet it must be pointed out that present trends in our church are still toward more and higher institutionalization. True, the Lord's work is big business. Yet when we come to it with the "big business" approach, though we may gain some things, we also lose some things. And among that which is lost is the greater involvement of the laity in the work of witnessing.

It would be well, then, to reassess our present inclinations. Will the appointment of a director of religious education, a SWIM program, denominationally sponsored and supervised, be helpful in the long run? Perhaps. But perhaps not. There are many who are fighting increased federal controls in the political arena. Without saying anything about that, we may well consider that same trend on the ecclesiastical front — from the standpoint of how this may affect our evangelistic image. There is danger that this can result in less, rather than more, actual missionary involvement on the grass-roots level. References are made (humorously) to our denominational building as "The Pentagon." I do not object. Should we arrive, however, at the point where there is truth in that allegation, it will then have become a bad joke.

### *The Modification of the Mind of Safety*

It is well possible that a greater public-relations-mindedness, plus a closer identification between clergy and laity, wherein the rank and file will increasingly be aware of each one's call to "witness," will help us on the road to an improved evangelistic image in the eyes of God. The modification of the mind of safety, however, is also needed. Dr. Henry Stob has written well on this subject, in the pages of this journal, and his contribution was much needed.

There is, of course, value in having the mind of safety. God has given each one of His children, and His church, an "instinct of peril" which it is our duty to exercise. It is for this reason that we do not title this paragraph, "The destruction of the mind of safety." That would not only be unwise, but also sinful. When an instinct runs wild, however, it becomes a phobia, and a proper subject for investigation by the psychiatrist.

A simple illustration may be in order. The impulse toward self-preservation is divinely implanted. However, when a person, in the interests of self-preservation, will ever increasingly limit his activities and lessen his contacts with others (e.g., washing his hands whenever he comes in contact with things or people, for there may be germs of disease; refusing to ride in an automobile because of the risk involved), then that person has allowed his instinct for self-preservation to run wild. It is interesting at this point to ask the question where we stand as a church in this point of reference. Does the element of risk deter us from "living" as a church, as it does the man in the illustration? Do we wash our hands as a denomination each time we come in contact with others? There is at least some evidence that this pattern marks our behavior. For example, we refused contact with the NAE (not that we recommend re-affiliation; there are some other inter-church organizations to consider); we stay aloof as congregations from most local community-ecclesiastical co-operative ventures; and an interchurch seminary in Nigeria fills us with fear and dread.

There is, of course, the Biblical injunctive that we be not unequally yoked. But does that apply here? We lay great stress upon this — ecclesiastically too. It may be, however, that there is also an ecclesiastical implication in the words of Christ when He said, "He who loseth his life shall find it," and in the correlative, "He that saveth his life shall lose it." There is urgent reason for us to re-examine ourselves from this whole point of view. Such re-appraisal can do no harm; it may indeed result in much good — for our evangelistic image too. There is at least some truth to the charge that our fear of adding water to the milk has immobilized us to some extent in a world increasingly hell-bent.

### *A Deeper Commitment to Christ on the Part of All*

In considering our subject of the Evangelistic Image of the Christian Reformed Church, we should end (if we do not begin) with the appeal that we need, in all of our hearts, a new spirit of dedication and consecration to our task as witnesses. I am convinced that the first order of the day is more concentration, exhortation, and inspiration in our pulpits on this subject. Our boys and girls and young people who will soon enough take over the reins must be subjected to this emphasis in Sunday school and Catechism, and in all the youth activities of the church.

They should, of course, be exposed to this in their homes first of all. But I am afraid that many are not getting it there. We are — we have become — an affluent people in an affluent society. Materialism holds a surer grip on many of us than the Lord Himself. So at least it would seem. Our numerical growth as a church (if we do not consider those who have come to us from Europe, and our increase in children) is a matter that gives us pause. Our paucity in numbers on our Seminary's rolls is again a matter of grave concern. Our evangelistic image, therefore, will not change much, at least not for the better, until we as a people call a denomination-

wide halt to our present way of life, shift gears, and start out upon a higher road.

It is amazing at times how much opposition is given the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Missions Board, the Back to God Hour, and similar ventures — both on the classical and synodical level — when there is a request for increase in quota. We ought (and we propose this support seriously) to double our mission work as of this year. If we did not know what to do with all of the funds at once, we could invest it in the cause of Christ at large. We could surely increase the salaries of some of our devoted missionaries, both at home and abroad, who find themselves in perennial financial straits. True, our people give. Yet more could give sacrificially.

It is not unrealistic to make such a proposal as this one is. It might, in fact, be just the dramatic thing we need to do in order to usher in a brand-new evangelistic image of our church. Today we give more to the government for armaments (by force) than we give to the cause of Christ (by choice). This alone ought to indicate to us that if we do not double our efforts now, the day may not be far when that privilege (unused) will be taken away.

# The New Canadians and the C. R. C.*

*by Herman Ridderbos*

ONE OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL BODIES OUTSIDE OF THE Netherlands with which the Gereformeerde Kerken have always maintained close contacts is the Christian Reformed Church in the United States and in Canada. These ties have been so close throughout the years because the Christian Reformed Church, as its name indicates, was established about 100 years ago by Dutch emigrants, the greater part of whom were members of the Secession. Since that time these contacts have not only been maintained but greatly strengthened, especially since World War II, when thousands of members of the Gereformeerde Kerken settled in Canada and there joined the ranks of the Christian Reformed Church, which up to that time was very weak in Canada. During that same period more than forty ministers of the Netherlands churches accepted calls to these Canadian churches. As a consequence there are very few among us that do not have relatives or friends among these new members of the Christian Reformed Church. This has resulted in a considerable increase of interest in the ecclesiastical and social life of this church, among our people, during the last decade.

The March issue of the *Reformed Journal* contains an interesting article that discusses the development of the Christian Reformed Church, which is owing partly to the influx of Dutch immigrants.

Before we proceed with this topic, it may not be amiss to say something concerning the various relationships in the Christian Reformed Church, in which the *Reformed Journal* plays a not unimportant part. This paper began publication about ten years ago; it was established by a number of leading figures in this church who were and are rather critical of the traditional structure and views within the church, and who, to use another metaphor, desired to sail a somewhat more progressive, and with respect to the traditional views, a more liberal course. The aims of the *Reformed Journal* are best understood when this publication is compared with *Torch and Trumpet*, one of whose editors is the aging but still vital and intrepid former editor of *The Banner*, the Rev. H. J. Kuiper. The views which are championed in this paper are signalized perhaps not so much by traditionalism as by a very close (we might say rigorous) adherence to the traditional confessional views, which it defends forcefully and pointedly, with strong determination, against various sorts of criticism and real or fancied deviations. It is always dangerous to speak of "wings" in a church, especially if they are further distinguished as "right" and "left" wings, for *both* wings would contend that they do not represent merely one side but that they desire to maintain the core and center. This is true also of the *Reformed Journal* and of the *Torch and Trumpet*, and in my opinion the partial justice of both contentions cannot be denied. Without schematizing one might say that the voice which speaks in the *Reformed Journal* sees our Calvinistic and Reformed traditions threatened by hardening and narrowing, while the *Torch and Trumpet* is on the alert against dimming and diluting.

This divergent approach manifests itself in various ways, even without an open conflict. For example, one of the most disputed questions within the Christian Reformed Church at the present time is the problem of "infallibility." This matter, which came up for discussion in the Christian Reformed Church in a rather unfortunate manner, and which

* This article first appeared in the Dutch weekly magazine, *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, edited by G. C. Berkouwer and Herman Ridderbos and published by J. H. Kok. The *Journal* is indebted to Mr. George Kamp for the English translation here given. Dr. Ridderbos lectured in the U.S. a few years ago under the sponsorship of the Calvin Foundation. He is Professor of New Testament in Kampen Seminary.

has already occupied the mind of the Synod, is now engaging the heart and mind not only of the theologians but also of the membership of the church in general in a rather vehement manner. The man of the *Torch and Trumpet* exhibit great anxiety with reference to the unimpaired maintenance of the authority of the Scriptures within the church, and attempt, with an appeal to the creeds, to bar as illegitimate every modification of the concept of infallibility that seems to detract from the verbal and literal view of inspiration. On the other side we find a pleading, often with an appeal to Calvin and other Reformed authors, for a broader view of infallibility that is more concerned with the *content* of the Scriptures. These men feel that it is not a detraction from the authority of the creeds nor from the intention and authority of the Scriptures to suggest that there are, in certain respects, inaccuracies and *dated* representations in the Scriptures; phenomena which, according to these spokesmen, do not in any respect obscure the *kerygma* and *teaching* of the Scriptures, but which cause them to wonder whether all of this, without exception, can be included in the infallibility doctrine.

It is understood that this and similar problems and differences of opinion also exist in other churches that hold to the Reformed doctrines. It is to be found among us as well. However, because at a given moment this matter was brought to public attention in a somewhat careless manner, and because neither side has been sparing with assertions which were not always conducive to serve the cause of truth and peace, this question in itself constitutes a somewhat dangerous "bone of contention" in the midst of the Christian Reformed Church. It is definitely not my intention to present this matter in an excessively dramatic setting. Our Christian Reformed brethren are not always inclined to beat about the bush. Sometimes the chips fly among us too! Our brethren have developed a very strong feeling of belonging together and of needing one another. If perhaps our theological caution is somewhat greater — because of sad experiences! — it is my impression that they would not quite so readily resort to *ecclesiastical* party formation as has been the case repeatedly among us. That also explains the fact that the non-ecclesiastical periodicals, particularly the *Torch and Trumpet,* do at times serve a heady and undiluted wine, while in the over-arching ecclesiastical publication, *The Banner,* the sun of ecclesiastical peace has not yet disappeared behind the clouds.

After this somewhat unforeseen excursion, I return to my starting point: the place and influence of the Reformed people who emigrated from the Netherlands. In a fascinating article by Dr. George Stob, in the *Reformed Journal* for March, 1961, we read that during the past decade the membership of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada has increased approximately 50,000. We may assume that by far the largest part of this increase consists of emigrants from the Netherlands. Compared with a total membership in the U.S. and Canada of less than 250,000, this certainly is not a small percentage. Much prudence and mutual understanding is required, therefore, properly to integrate such a large influx of "newcomers" into the existing and settled Christian Reformed Church. We must acknowledge — and none will deny it — that during these years the "old-timers" have willingly extended a helping hand to these Netherlands emigrants and have made important financial sacrifices in their behalf. On the other hand, the Hollanders have done their utmost to adapt themselves to their new environment, to adopt the English language in their church services, and to take an active part in church life. They have also — and Dr. Stob exhibits great understanding in this respect — shown an awareness of being part of a *Canadian* church, with special responsibility for the *Canadian* way of life, and have resisted a too easy conformity with ecclesiastical life in the United States. While there have been voices raised in favor of a *separate* Canadian Christian Reformed Church, until the present — and I believe wisely so — the striving has been in the direction of indigenous development and mutual influence in *one* ecclesiastical relationship, rather than in two separate church organizations, *one* in the U.S. and *one* in Canada. "Integration," says Dr. Stob, "does not mean the reduction of the whole to an undifferentiated pattern of uniformity, but the cultivation of a vital unity together with an honoring and a protecting of natural and needful differences. In how far this means the Canadian churches should feel moved or be encouraged to develop their own characteristic features of life and practice and organization one cannot say. But it is certain that while as Christians we live in terms of national and cultural distinctions, we shall have to find in them occasions for common growth and enrichment and not for estrangement or separation."

Even more significant than these formal and organizational questions, in Dr. Stob's opinion, is the difference between the mind and spirit of the Dutch immigrant on the one hand, and that of the American members of the church on the other. One may not ask these Netherlanders to leave their particular convictions and concerns behind in the country from which they came, and conform to the prevailing thought and practice of the American Reformed people. A clear point of difference is the application of Reformed principles to the social and political situation. In the Netherlands, with its confessional and political organizations, this application differs considerably from the policy pursued by Canada and the United States thus far. With

reference to this matter, Dr. Stob writes that some of the "Canadian brethren are sometimes tempted to a high degree of impatience with their American brethren, who seem to them only too often 'dragging their feet' in matters of social and political action, and in kingdom activities to be governed too much by practical and too little by principial considerations. If this is so," says Dr. Stob, "we shall have occasion to learn better through the exercise of our enlarged and enriched fellowship.

It is interesting also to read his opinion concerning the contribution which the Netherlands have made to church life. "Assuming a certain kind of homogeneity among them," he writes, "it may be said that they constitute a significant segment in the Christian Reformed Church. Since they are theologically well oriented, able, energetic, and articulate, they are capable of exercising a considerable influence in the Christian Reformed Church, and this ability will increase with a greater measure of orientation to their new church and a greater mastery of the language. This is the more interesting because Canadians cannot be as conveniently categorized as we sometimes assume. There are some things in respect of which they seem quite 'conservative' to some people in the United States, and other things in respect of which they seem to be somewhat 'liberal' to others. Meanwhile, their position is strategic, and in the major church assemblies they could hold a kind of balance of power. There are, indeed, some issues in respect of which one already hears mention of a 'bloc of Canadian votes' at Synod. The Canadians, we are sure, will regard their interesting position with a sense of humor, and exercise themselves in it with a good conscience for the healthiest communion of the Church of Christ."

This relatively strong influence of the Netherlands emigrants may increase in the years to come because a disproportionally large ratio of future ministers in the Christian Reformed Church appears to be of Netherlands-Canadian origin. On the one hand, Dr. Stob is very grateful for this strong contribution of the Canadian churches, in view of the serious ministerial shortage in the otherwise flourishing Christian Reformed Church. But on the other hand he foresees difficulties:

"We may, for one thing, thank God for all that He has given to us in the influx of immigrant Netherlanders who have come to Canada and so greatly enriched the life of our denomination. While it is true that they have in a blessed way increased our burden, they have also brought very great treasures with them. If it were not for the ministers from the Netherlands come to serve our Canadian churches, and the very large proportion of immigrants preparing for and entering into our ministry, our ministerial shortage would be much more serious than it is at present. Since 1950, forty ministers have come to us from churches in the Netherlands. And in recent years the percentage of immigrant Netherlanders studying for the ministry in our church has been as high as 33 to 40 percent.

"This is not an unmixed good, however. There is something about it that should humble us and induce real concern. Prof. Dekker puts it well: 'It goes without saying that we do not regret having Dutch immigrants in such numbers studying for the ministry. . . . But when we consider that the number of immigrant students is proportionately far in excess of the number of native Americans and Canadians, there is clear reason for concern both as to the failure of our home churches to raise up sons for the ministry and as to a possible future deficiency in a truly indigenous ministerial leadership for our churches."

The foregoing indicates that the Canadian immigrants have assumed an important place in Christian Reformed ecclesiastical life in a short space of time. Dr. Stob's very significant article also shows a large measure of appreciation by the Americans for the immigrants' active participation. Indeed, it is not impossible that definite contrasts in the Christian Reformed Church may perhaps be conquered with the aid of Netherlands experiences. In that respect the editors of the *Reformed Journal* possibly have greater expectations from the continuing developments in the Netherlands than those of the other publications. However this may be, if the integration problem is tackled by both Americans and Canadians in the spirit in which Dr. Stob writes, the large influx of Netherlanders can become a blessing for the Canadian and American churches, while on the other hand the immigrants already have immeasurable reasons for gratitude to the churches that received them. For our Gereformeerde people in the Netherlands this development on the other side of the ocean remains a matter of consuming interest, which they will continue to observe with great good-will. With that in mind, we have been happy to devote time and space to Dr. Stob's important and interesting article in these columns.

# *"I Wrote the Last Gospel"* *

## *by John Calvin Reid*

I AM THE AUTHOR of the book in the New Testament known as "the Fourth Gospel," or "the Gospel According to John." I propose to tell you how I came to write it and what I hoped it would mean to its first readers, as well as what I hope it will mean to you.

I sometimes wonder how I ever found courage to undertake the task — because, you see, the other Gospels were already written and comparatively well known before I wrote mine. Assuming that you are familiar with them, would it ever occur to you to feel that another was needed? I did feel there was such a need — not for another "historical" Gospel to provide additional facts about the life of Jesus, but for one that would provide a deeper and clearer understanding of the *meaning* of the facts. Just as a minister in preparing and delivering a sermon recognizes that the most important part is not the explanation of truth, but its application, so in my Gospel I sought to interpret and *apply* the spiritual meaning of the incarnation.

In the first three Gospels the emphasis is upon *biography* — what Jesus did and said. I place the emphasis upon the *inner significance* of what He did and said. My Gospel is more a *meditation* than a biography. It deals more with mystical meanings than with the recording of facts. It belongs to the library of devotion rather than of history.

There was one group of believers in the Early Church that I had particularly in mind, namely, the Hellenists. These were cultured Greeks accustomed to thinking largely in philosophical and mystical terms. There is a brief paragraph in my Gospel which is very significant at this point — the paragraph which tells about certain Greeks who came up to Jerusalem at the time of the feast of the Passover. These approached Philip, one of the disciples of Jesus, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

In my Gospel I sought to answer that wistful prayer, that is, to explain Jesus, His coming and His ministry, in terms that would be understood by and that would appeal to the cultured Greek mind. My prologue or introduction is a good illustration of this. Instead of presenting the incarnation in sentimental terms, narrating the story of the birth of a Baby in Bethlehem, I concentrated upon the philosophical and spiritual meaning of His birth — "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."

The "word" of man is that by which he declares himself, by which he puts himself in communication wi other persons and reveals his mind to them. It is h *expressed thought.* By his "word" he makes his reaso ing and his feeling known; by his "word" he issues co mands and gives effect to his will. His "word" is distin from his thought and yet cannot exist separately fro it. Proceeding from his mind, from that which is inmo and highest in him, it carries with itself the imprint character as well as the intent of his purpose. A man "word" is the means by which his character, his persona ity, his thought, his desires and hopes are conveyed others.

This will help you to understand that when I wro that Jesus was the *Logos* or "Word" of God, I mea He was and is the noblest expression of God's thoug toward man; He was and is God's mind, God's will, God hope, God's love, embodied in a person — a living pictu of God's highest revelation thrown upon the screen history, that the world might see and understand and r spond and be saved. Yes, this is deep philosophy, b also vivid practical truth — "the Word became flesh a dwelt among us." In other words, God expressed H highest thought for His world, His highest thought f each one of us as individuals, in the human life of Jesu

Another current philosophical term I used, equal vivid and meaningful, was the term "light." "In hi was life, and the life was the *light* of men." Here, y see, I was picturing Jesus as bearing the same relatio ship to God as rays do to the sun. Streaming down fro heaven, they drive away darkness and flood the wor with light. Jesus as the spiritual Light of the Wor does that and more — because His Spirit, like a powerf X-ray, can penetrate the mind and drive out even t darkness of sin, the darkness of grief, the darkness anxiety, the darkness of doubt. Such was my meanin when I wrote that He was "the true light, that enlighte every man . . . coming into the world." This again is deep mystical philosophical idea, but expressed in simp terms — so simple that even a child may understand and every trusting heart appropriate its meaning. Ju as on a glorious springtime day every flower and tr is drinking in the light of the sun, so your soul, if op in gratitude and devotion toward Him who is the Lig of the World, will be flooded with His grace and trut

All through my Gospel you will find me doing th same thing — interpreting for minds such as the Gree possessed, and such as some of you no doubt posse the inner significance of God's revelation in Christ, t mystical meaning of things Jesus did and said wh on the earth.

For example, when I recounted His night-time inte view with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, my ma

* This piece appears as the last chapter in the book entitled *We Wrote the Gospels* by John Calvin Reid, published by the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. The book sells for $2.00 and may be purchased from bookstores or direct from the publisher at 255 Jefferson, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

rpose was to illustrate and to emphasize the doctrine the new birth — "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless e is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

This does not mean, and I did not mean to imply, at all conversion experiences are identical, or that it is ential that one be able to remember the exact time and ce his own occurred. No one can remember, for exam-, the hour and place of his physical birth. But it es mean, as the Apostle Paul puts it in one of his ters, that any man in Christ Jesus is a *new creature* — dically different from the man he was before he re-ved Christ. And the man on the outside of such an perience must never forget that it is a new birth that is quired. No care spent on moral conduct, no improve-nt and refinement of the natural man, is sufficient. For ing, it is not an improved caterpillar that is needed, but utterfly. It is not a caterpillar of finer color or more pid movement or larger proportions, but a new crea-re. Even so, by nature every man is earth-bound and n-bound. By grace alone can he mount up with wings as eagle. Reformation is not the answer, but regenera-n. As I expressed it elsewhere: "As many as received n, to them gave he power to become the sons of d."

In like manner, when I recorded the story of Jesus king with the woman at the well in Samaria, my main rpose was simply to lead up to, to illustrate, and to phasize the great truth He uttered when He said to r: "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him ll never thirst; the water that I shall give him will come in him a spring of water welling up to eternal e."

Likewise, in telling the story of the feeding of the e thousand, I was interested, primarily, not in the racle or even in its effect upon the multitudes — the her three Gospel writers had recorded it from that int of view — but in the use Jesus made of it after-rd, namely, to interpret the mystical meaning of e communion sacrament: "Do not labor for the food hich perishes, but for the food which endures to rnal life . . . . I am the bread of life; he who comes to e shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall ver thirst."

Also, the story of the raising of Lazarus from the ad I use as a background for and an illustration of e lofty truth embodied in one of the greatest of all the terances of Jesus, one which goes to the very heart Easter — "I am the resurrection and the life; he who lieves in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and hoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

You see, Mary and Martha were not unbelievers. ey were not grieving as those who had no hope in a e after death for their brother, but as those whose pe was deferred. When Martha said: "I know that will rise again in the resurrection at the last day," e meant, "But this is small consolation! What about e long ages in between today and the resurrection at e last day? What about his soul in the meantime? Will it disintegrate while his body undergoes decay in the ground?"

In answer, Jesus said in effect: "Martha, there is no in-between time. The soul of your brother is not disintegrating, nor is it dead or asleep. Lazarus is still alive — thinking, feeling, listening, and capable of acting. To prove it I will call him back, that you may know once and for all that I am the resurrection and the life; and that he who believes in me shall never die."

You see, Jesus was reminding Martha of what He emphasized over and over in His teaching ministry, namely, that eternal life is something which begins here and now and continues on into eternity, something that should be thought of primarily in terms of quality rather than duration. As He said upon another occasion (and it was I who preserved this great definition): "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." Eternal life is the divine life infused into our life through daily fellowship with God, something that begins here on the earth, if it begins at all, and which continues through and beyond death. It is like the rose of which one of your poets has written, which, as it climbed a wall, came to a crevice through which there shone a beam of light. With never a thought of fear or pride, it followed the light through the crevice and unfolded its bloom on the other side.

Even so, to lives that find their beginning, their continuing, and their end in Christ, death is but the crevice through which the soul passes to achieve its ultimate perfection and beauty in the warm and glorious sunlight on the other side of the wall.

Jesus' words to Martha mean that they who are in union with Christ can no more die than a living branch can die so long as it abides in a living vine. As Jesus said at another time: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch . . . abides in the vine . . . . Because I live you shall live also." In other words, if any man is in Christ, not only is he a new creature, but Christ lives in him. Therefore he can no more die than Christ Himself can die. He and Christ are one, both for time and eternity. Realizing this, Jesus could and did say, "Whoever . . . believes in me shall never die."

A glorious promise? Yes, but also a definitely limited one, one to which is attached an emphatic condition. In the teaching of Jesus regarding eternal life are no soft sentimental words to the effect that everyone will be saved. Granting that the Judge of all the earth will surely do what is right, and therefore will deal mercifully with heathen peoples who have had no opportunity to either accept or reject the Gospel, what about those who live in your land of open Bibles and open churches, and whose public expression of religion amounts to no more than one or two spasms per year? Surely it behooves all of you in this land of Christian privilege and opportunity to weigh well the first words in the promise, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

What about those who do not meet the condition?

On another page of my book, I quote Jesus' own straightforward answer to that question — "If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned." You see, this illustration of the vine points not only to the glorious destiny of the branches which are in union with the vine, but to the dark doom of those that are broken off!

But just here — and for this may God be thanked — the analogy breaks down. A branch lying at the foot of the vine is an inanimate thing — helpless, hopeless. It does not know its lost condition, nor can it do anything about it. But not so with you, for God has breathed into you the breath of life. You can think, feel, will, act. By prayer you can bestir yourself; by faith you can lift yourself up and up until you are by the very side of Christ. Then, by one definite act of commitment, you may bind your soul to His until, as is the case when a branch is engrafted into a vine, His life begins to flow into you to be absorbed by your life, transforming and revitalizing your whole being until you become more and more both a Christ-like and a Christ-conscious person.

To this end I am writing this chapter, and to that same end I wrote my entire Gospel many years ago — even as I stated at the end: "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing *you may have life in his name.*"

In your day and age the word "believe" has come to cover a multitude of attitudes, but the point I would make now, and the point I emphasized over and over in my Gospel, is simply this: faith that does not reproduce the spirit and character of Christ in the believer is not even worthy of the name. Call it superstition, call it sentimentality, call it religiosity, call it hypocrisy, but do not call it faith! As another New Testament write has bluntly put it, "Faith without works is dead."

Even so I would say that faith divorced from lif faith that does not link one with the purpose and powe of God as revealed in Christ, is as dead as a corps Now an embalmer can do some amazing things wit a corpse. He can make it look so "natural" tha from a distance you almost expect the eyes to open an the lips to speak. But all appearances to the contrary it is still a corpse. And so it is with all outward appea ances of religion without the divine life within!

In closing I present to you One who knows nothin about embalming but who knows everything about lif Never did He say, "I am come to be your mortician. But once He did say, "I am come that they might hav life [present tense — might have it here and now and that they might have it more abundantly." Th picture is that of a cup full and running over!

The Abundant Life. Is it yours? If not, how ma it become yours? By your taking Christ into your hea and keeping Him there, allowing Him to think and spea and serve through your mind and lips and hands, unt you come to say, as did Paul: "It is no longer I that liv but Christ liveth in me."

When that is true, death can have no more powe over you than over Him. Having loved His own, H will love them and will keep them even unto the en and with Him there is no end short of eternity! Th is eternal life — to know Him and to abide in Him, an then to face the future in the calm confidence that:

*The stars will shine for a million years,*
*For a million years and a day,*
*But Christ and I will live and love,*
*When the stars have passed away.*

# Preacher to Sinners

## *by Paul C. Zylstra*

*In this second, and concluding, article on the preaching of John Calvin, Reverend Paul Zylstra again shows how strongly the great Reformer believed and practiced the truth that in the preaching of the gospel God freely offers his grace to sinners.*

We must always render Calvin's sermonic emphases understandable in terms of the culture of his day and the need for a violent apologetic over against Romanism ("those Papists!"). Every age needs its own emphasis, and Calvin needed to counteract the Romanist teaching of work-righteousness and other false doctrines. This meant that he constantly emphasized the doctrine of God's sovereignty, and around it the other cardinal doctrines found their proper place. The result is that his discourses are sometimes quite theological and polemical, and his appeal to the "other sheep" is reduced to narrower limits.

Yet Calvin believed that the gospel is concentrated in the promise of divine mercy. His insistence upon the inability of man and upon the bondage of man's will was not designed to plunge man into despair, but to raise him from his lethargy and awaken in him the longing for what he lacked — salvation. God, in spite of all opposition, proposes to Himself the salvation of men. This is not an impotent desire, but an all-powerful energy, and it realizes itself in the hearer's believing.

As Calvin preached, he realized that God has His

elect people everywhere in the world, which requires the call to live — through preaching. Preaching, therefore, is to him the means whereby God's love comes home to the consciousness of the one upon whom that love is set, and it demands action. The responses to the message have life-or-death significance, and they must not be delayed.

Calvin insisted that man realize his distress, grieve over it and cry to God about it. The teaching of election is never a ground for complacency. When man looks to the gospel for deliverance, it becomes the revelation of God's will to save him, something that itself imparts the forgiveness of sin and eternal life, and therefore is embraced by lost man with joy. The preaching of the law paves the way for this gospel:

> The Law . . . is so that we may lament, seeing the wretchedness that is in us, that we may grow faint, and that we are so guilty, that we will come to present ourselves before God to be condemned; and then that we may be urged to request Him to do what we cannot.[1]

The gospel then becomes for man a free gift of the divine favor. The divine will herein addresses itself to man's will and heart, and produces the faith which rests in this will and builds on it. And if the gospel is itself grace in its very origin, that is, the revelation of God's gracious will, and at the same time the instrument for making this will effective in man's heart, then faith must become the confidence in the gracious will of God.

> Since the faith of these shepherds was so great that it fought against everything that could turn them from coming to our Lord, we will be doubly guilty and stripped of every excuse, unless we learn in their school, and unless Christ's birth be not a scandal to hinder us, or to make us turn away from the good way, and unless we come to yield to Him as our sovereign King. . . . This, then, is how we must practice this doctrine, that we do not fail to come to Christ, although at first sight we do not find in Him what our flesh . . . desires.[2]

The Geneva Reformer indicates man's responsibility to respond to God's grace:

> The pagans who are not reformed by the Spirit of God are not therefore like asses.[3]

Again:

> In His Word God . . . tells us how much He loves us, begs us to come to Him . . . and persuades us to have the courage to present ourselves before Him.[4]

Further:

> Let us acknowledge our disease that we may come to the remedy. And what is this remedy? It is to have our Lord Jesus Christ for our High Priest.[5]

> Christ has not only proclaimed the glad tidings, but has sent forth His ministers to preach peace. . . . This salvation belongs to all the world without exception.[6]

> Seeing that God has displayed His goodness to call us to salvation, let us not on our part be stiff-necked . . . for this will prevent our coming to God. . . . When the gospel is called a witness, it is to assure us that God is kind and favorable toward us; but if we doubt, and rebel . . . we cannot do Him a greater dishonor. Let us remember that whenever the gospel is preached to us, God bears us witness of His goodness.[7]

Calvin refers directly to the reprobate in very telling language. With him, reprobation does *not* mean the *withholding* of all *grace*:

> The gospel is preached to a great number which, notwithstanding, are reprobate; yea, and God discovers and shows that He has cursed them: that they have no part nor portion in His Kingdom, *because* they resist the gospel, and cast away the grace that is offered them.[8]

In a sermon on Titus 1:10-12 we find the following:

> Are we not then sufficiently warned? If we be turned from the right way, whom shall we blame for it? If Satan be suffered to deceive us, and we be given over to a reprobate state, it is no more than we deserve: *because* we have not used the remedy which God has provided for us.[9]

EXPOSITION IS, FOR CALVIN, ALSO EXHORTATION TO receive and obey the teaching. Faith is an affair of the intellect, but more, it is a voluntary re-orientation of the previously unwilling will. Hence, exhortation is also necessary, and this is employed a great deal in the sermons on Isaiah 53:

> If we are ashamed to receive [Christ], we are most certainly excluded from all hope of salvation. . . . We ought to mount up by faith to the glory of our Lord . . . to seek our salvation in His cross. . . . We must let our souls be sprinkled by our Lord. . . . Whenever He presents Himself to us and would draw near, we must not repulse Him by our unbelief, but must give Him access by faith. . . .[10]

Further along in the same sermon we read these lines:

> God does not wait for us to ask Him. . . . He takes the initiative and offers Himself freely and sets before

1. Sermon 72 on Deut. 5:1ff., quoted by Nixon, *Calvin, Expository Preacher.*

2. Sermon on Luke 2:1-14, quoted by Nixon, *Calvin, Expository Preacher.*

3. Quoted by R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments.*

4. Quoted by Geo. Johnson, "Calvinism and Preaching," in *Evangelical Quarterly*, p. 251.

5. *The Mystery of Godliness*, Sermon on I Tim. 2:5, 6, p. 204.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

8. *The Mystery of Godliness*, Sermon on II Tim. 1:8, 9, p. 44 (italics mine).

9. *Ibid.*, Sermon on Titus 1:10-12 (italics mine).

10. T. H. L. Parker, ed. and transl., *Sermons on Isaiah's Prophecy*, pp. 36, 38.

> us His only Son with His teaching. In this He shows Himself so worthy of love, that He ought to be received without any argument. Should we not all be inflamed with a zeal to despise all else and embrace this Redeemer?[11]

In a sermon on Isaiah 53:1-4, Calvin says:

> It is a strange thing that God calls men to Himself and tries to win them in the kindest and most gracious manner in the world, and yet they run away from Him and deliberately refuse to come to the salvation that is held out to them. . . . God commands that His Word shall be proclaimed to all — both to the good and to the bad — yet He works secretly in His elect . . . [with a] power hidden from the reprobate. . . .[12]

THE WARMTH AND FERVOR OF CALVIN'S APPEAL TO his audience becomes striking in these Passion sermons. He does not allow his teaching on predestination to dull the edge of the *appeal* of the gospel. He says:

> Now it looks a mistaken policy to seek a thing so much to be desired as our salvation in Him who has nothing pleasing in Himself. So we have to rise above this temptation in order to come to Christ. . . . [To] come to Christ, the proper remedy is to know why He died, how His death benefits us. To know this will destroy all stumbling-blocks. . . . If I look only at Christ I will turn away from Him and hold Him of no account. But if I first of all look at myself and then come to Him, what He has suffered will be laudable to me. Why? Because I will consider that I am a poor sinner and have provoked the wrath of God against me so terribly that He is my judge. . . . Then I will come to say, "What means have you for coming to an agreement with God? Can *you* . . . satisfy His demands [in the] least . . .?"[13]

He continues:

> It is as if Isaiah had said, "You poor blind souls! You take no account of the Son of God, and everyone of you by his ingratitude shuts the door and so cannot approach . . . to obtain salvation that He brings to you . . . because you have not become aware of your sins and humbled yourselves. . . . Once look at your poverty and filthiness and you will be ashamed of your state and realize that there is no other means of salvation than Christ . . . who makes Himself a poor sinner and takes your burdens."[14]

Still more evidence that Calvin recognized the free offer in the *preaching situation* is found in this quotation from a sermon on Isaiah 53:4-6:

> I ask you, when someone gets an internal abscess, is not his case much worse than if the abscess were visible and could be lanced? . . . . We must come to our Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise we can never have inward peace. . . . Let us come to Jesus' symbolical action in enlightening the blind . . . dumb . . . deaf. . . . When we join what is set forth in Matthew with what Isaiah wanted to declare . . . we learn that unless we have our refuge in this Redeemer, we will always stay rotting . . . and will become completely corrupt. . . .[15]

"Everyone must seek the remedy," says Calvin the preacher:

> We all have to feel . . . that we are condemned [which] will [not let] each one of us go back home without being moved by it — or [without] being stirred to seek the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Do not look at the general state of the human race, but withdraw into yourself and there consider what you are.[16]

God is saying: "Come, repent and believe." Calvin declares:

> So this teaching ought to make us correct all our presumption so that we may let ourselves be governed only by the Spirit and Word. So then let us learn to come to the source and fountain . . . for our Lord Jesus has enough to satisfy us all: . . . when we come to seek it of Him. . . . Christ has His arms wide open to draw us to Himself . . . [and] wishes us to be plunged within His blood. So when God invites us so sweetly, let us come . . . let us not doubt that He will be sufficient.[17]

One notes the different viewpoints of heaven and earth in the sermon on Isaiah 53:7, 8:

> Our Lord only calls those who are "heavy-laden and travail." Therefore, He excludes all those who slumber in their iniquities. For what will bring us to Him save the voice by which He invites us? The door is shut to as many as blind themselves with their pride and presumption. . . . "Come unto Me," He says. But to whom? It is true that He calls "all the world"; but yet He makes a distinction, "You who are heavy-laden and travail." When He has called all who need His help, He shows that none can have a share in it save him who is heavy-laden and labors. So when we feel our burden and groan beneath it, knowing that we can do no other, the road is prepared and opened up for us to come to our Lord, for He has His arms outstretched to receive us.[18]

In illustrating his point in this sermon (we must recognize the majesty given to Christ in His human nature), Calvin says of the Ethiopian eunuch:

> And since in this way the poor man who was busy reading the Bible without knowing what it wanted to say was converted to our Lord, let us take care not to go to sleep, but rather to follow what is said in the Psalm: "Today if ye hear His voice, harden not your hearts." So then, let us so taste the Gospel that is here preached to us, that we may be led to Christ, and let us so accept it that we may hold to [it]. . . . He has been raised above the heavens to draw us to Himself, as He Himself says: "When I shall be lifted up from this world, I will draw all things to myself."[19]

11. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

There are scattered references to the conditional nature of the gospel offer in the sermon on Isaiah 53:11:

> Let us open the door to our Lord that He may make us, who approach Him in faith, partakers of the fruit of His death and passion.
>
> Many unbelievers we see perishing, for whom the death and passion of our Lord serves only for more severe condemnation, because they trample underfoot His blood and reject His grace offered to them. . . . We on our side can receive no profit from Him save by the knowledge of Him.
>
> In the Gospel God says: "Believe that my only Son is your Redeemer; embrace His death as the remedy for all your ills; plunge yourself beneath His blood and it will be your cleansing, you will be washed clean by it. . . ." To have the Word in our heart and mouth, we must come to Christ, for it is He who by His Holy Spirit writes and inscribes in us the teaching of salvation.[20]

ONE WOULD SOMETIMES GET THE IMPRESSION THAT Calvin assumes too much: that all those within his hearing are born-again individuals:

> Although unbelievers may close the door on themselves and deprive themselves of the good they ought to receive through Christ, let us have our ears attentive to receive the witness given us in the Gospel.[21]

But then again he will quote Romans 1:16 and say,

> If we refuse the Gospel as the means of saving us, it is as if we reject the salvation that God has *wished* us to obtain in His Son, and to which He daily invites and exhorts us.[22]

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 121, 126, 128.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 130 (italics mine).

One wonders about the exegesis of "many" as being the equivalent to "all" in the sermon on Isaiah 53:12. The result of Calvin's explanation is startling when seen in the light of his teachings:

> When we come to Him, we should not doubt that He will receive us with all kindness. . . . Our Lord Jesus Christ was offered to all the world . . . He suffered for all, and there is neither great nor small who is not inexcusable today, for we can obtain salvation in Him. Unbelievers who turn away from Him and who deprive themselves of Him by their malice are today doubly culpable. For how will they excuse their ingratitude in not receiving the blessing in which they could share by faith? . . . For the greater number we are who come to Him, the more will we find Him rich to supply. . . . Let us not fear to come to Him in great numbers, and each one of us bring His neighbors, seeing that He is sufficient to save us all.[23]

Yet Calvin adds,

> It is true that although Isaiah says Christ prayed for the wicked, He Himself declares that He does not pray for all the world, for those who please themselves in their iniquities and are entrenched obstinately in them; for they are cut off from this blessing and privilege.[24]

I BELIEVE THAT ONE OF THE SECRETS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS of Calvin's sermons lies in the fact that the salvation of every one of his hearers was a burden upon Calvin. His hearers included many who were virtually forced to attend church services; undoubtedly among them were unbelievers. Calvin seems to say to each one of his hearers, "If you are being drawn, but are not yet sure of your salvation, the next thing to do is to make sure of it — you individually, by a responsible act of your will."

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 141.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

# *Understanding and Creating*

## *by William M. Wiebenga*

THE PROBLEM OF ARTICULATING THE CHRISTIAN faith has developed to the point at which many have concluded that such an articulation is impossible. This position is somewhat implicit in the views of those who stress the complete otherness of God, the complete separation of the vertical and horizontal dimension of man, the irrationality of Christian faith. In the face of the development of this religious position, in the face of the permeation of our culture by scientific technology, in the face of increasing specialization at all levels of education, it is not surprising that we should feel that we of the Reformed position have fallen short of the goal which we have set for ourselves, namely, the integration of our Christian commitment with the whole of life. Thus it is fitting that the problem of our approach to education continues to be discussed.

In his article on *The Weight of History* (*Reformed Journal*, February, 1961) Mr. N. Wolterstorff cites a list of symptoms that suggest a weakness in our educational approach. He suggests that these symptoms are the effects of pursuing an "understanding" approach to education rather than a "creating"

one. Yet it is not immediately apparent that the symptoms cited are indeed the result of pursuing an "understanding" approach. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to defend the "understanding" approach as described by Mr. Walterstorff; rather, it is to suggest that the very distinction as made by Mr. Wolterstorff may itself be symptomatic of a more basic difficulty.

Mr. Wolterstorff formulates the problem as one of approaches to education. By formulating the problem in this way, he is suggesting that the problem confronting us is one of the means to education. It is not that we are unaware of the aims of education; rather, it is the case that a wrong approach is being used to realize these aims. What, then, does Mr. Wolterstorff consider the aims of a Christian education to be? He writes:

> As Christians all our education must be aimed to this end: To get our Christian community, as a whole, to make creative contributions to the culture of the twentieth century, thereby implementing our vision.

The answer is vague and indefinite enough to effect an initial agreement. One would like to know just what vision it is that is to be implemented, and just how creative contributions do implement our vision. But Mr. Wolterstorff does not leave us in complete darkness as to what he means. He precedes this answer with the following comments:

> All human life is caught up in process and change. No science, no art, no field of human endeavor, stands still. To this fact a person can make either of two responses. He can sit back, watch the panorama of history, and try to understand what others are doing and have done. Or he can plunge in, contribute to the process, and influence its course.

I suppose that it is these two possible responses which serve as the basis for Mr. Wolterstorff's distinction in approaches to education. He says further:

> Education should not be a passive, absorbent process; the student must be forced into activity and creativity. Education should not be like filling a kettle with water. It should be like lighting a fire under the kettle.

To sit back or to plunge in, to be passive or to be active, to fill the kettle or to light a fire — these are the alternative approaches to education. It is this set of alternatives which become the basis for the distinction between the "understanding" approach and the "creating" approach.

In the course of the article the emphasis is on these approaches as *distinct* approaches. Mr. Wolterstorff does suggest that understanding is essential to creativity, but he does not suggest the converse, that creativity is essential to understanding. Thus I think that it is proper to conclude that he does view these as distinct and somewhat incompatible approaches to education. And, in deed, if these are distinct, and exhaust the alternatives, there is little doubt as to how we are to respond to these approaches. We can only regard ourselves as silly for having entertained the "understanding" approach as even a possible approach, and exercise "our absolute duty to plunge in — to contribute to art, philosophy, science, theology, etc." To do anything other than this would be to betray our commitment.

But before rushing off to the activity of creating, we should perhaps pause long enough to see if this is really what we must now do. In making this investigation I suggest we examine the two responses which Mr. Wolterstorff regards as the exhaustive responses to human life, the passive and the active. In the examination of these responses, the question with which we are concerned is precisely what we mean by education. I think it fitting that Mr. Wolterstorff has raised this question in connection with our response to human life. For education is in even its most minimal definition concerned with life. Human life, then, is described by Mr. Wolterstorff as caught up in process and change. Hence, the sciences which study it are regarded as not standing still. Again one wishes that Mr. Wolterstorff had said more. As they stand, these sentences are not much more informative than Heraclitus's mysterious statement that all is in flux. However, if it is indeed process that human life is caught up in, we can say something more. For if it is process, and not chaotic, unpredictable, random, chance occurrence, then even though there is change, there is a certain element of continuity. And, indeed, the very fact that sciences exist is an indication that such continuity does exist, in spite of the fact that the sciences are not standing still. Whether they are reduced to mathematical formulae in the human mind or laws fixed in the nature of things, the sciences depend on regularities.

However, it is Christian education with which we are concerned. Consequently, we can say more about the process in which human life is involved. We can describe process as providential, as being guided by the divine. The Christian is left with the task of discovering the processes of the universe, and of giving explanations of these processes; moreover, he is left with the problem of relating the facts of history. But he can be confident as he does so that these processes are not completely chaotic, and that history is not without meaning.

And there is another point at which our Christian commitment can assist us in reaching a proper approach to education. Among other things, being Reformed involves one in the problem as to the nature of the theological tradition. In the Reformed view, tradition is not regarded as a static set of propositions to be handed down from one age to the next. It is the value of a Reformed tra-

dition that it is continuously re-forming itself as the context is changed in which that tradition is articulated. It is continuously reshaped in the face of new errors, it is reformulated as old terms lose their meanings. The tradition is thus at once both something old and something new. But as tradition, the new is continuous with the old. Doctrines are shifted in their relations to one another, the emphases change, old formulations are dropped, new formulae are used: in the life of the church, through the Holy Spirit, the old is re-created into the new without changing its truth. Concern with tradition is thus twofold — it is at one and the same time to preserve the teachings of the church as historically articulated, and to articulate those teachings in such a way that they are full of meaning to us who hear them in the particular time and place at which we find ourselves.

This activity of preservation and articulation (or communication) demands both the activity of creating and of understanding in harmony one with the other. One cannot create without understanding, because prior to reformation it is necessary to understand what it is that is being reformed. But neither can one understand without creating. For to understand, it is necessary to be thoroughly acquainted with the conditions and factors influencing that position which one is seeking to understand. And these cannot be found by an observation of textbooks, or a survey of the recorded facts. For in such a case it is the very thoughts as they occurred in the minds of the formulators that one wishes to understand. It is a creative process which one seeks to understand, and it can only be understood through similar creative activity. The act of understanding in this case is not just one of memorizing propositions and observing facts, it is a creative activity. Yet it is not to be identified with creating, for its effect is different. In the former case it leads to an understanding of something past or present; in the latter, to something that is new. This is evident to those whose chief concern is with the history of dogma, or of the world. Historiography is something other than history.

In resuming the discussion of education, the question arises as to whether or not there is a tradition in education that is to be preserved and communicated in a manner analogous to the theological tradition. Initially someone may answer this question in the affirmative and then proceed to describe the Western Greek and Judaeo-Christian tradition, a set of ideals and values that have been the basis of the culture peculiar to the West. However, to what extent such a tradition does in fact exist is open to dispute, and serious doubts have been raised as to the ultimate validity of the ideals and values associated with that tradition. Consequently, I do not wish to pursue the question of tradition (or history) in education in terms of the existence and validity of what is referred to as the Western tradition. Another approach to the problem will have to be found.

This other approach to the problem of the weight of history can be found by considering Mr. Wolterstorff's suggested approach to history:

> The fundamental justification for studying history is not simply to understand ourselves; rather, it is to find aid in solving the problems which confront us in our own work. We must go to history and tradition armed with questions, and insistent upon answers. For our questions and our problems are not wholly new and novel.

In these remarks, as throughout the entire article, Mr. Wolterstorff presupposes a disjunction between "understanding" and "creating." We have on the one hand a set of problems with which we are armed when we go to history. It is for these problems that we are to find creative answers. We have on the other hand history to which we go and which we seek to understand only because "our problems are not wholly new and novel." Thus Mr. Wolterstorff suggests that our problems are one thing, and history quite another. But this is hardly acceptable. It is not acceptable because although there may not be a set of answers within history ready at hand, the problems that we have to deal with do have their seat in history. Perhaps the most important aspect of answering any problem is to formulate it correctly. If we insist on the formulation of the questions prior to going to history, as Mr. Wolterstorff seems to suggest, we may well be depriving ourselves of acceptable answers from the beginning.

I do not mean to suggest that history determines for us just what problems we have to deal with and how they are to be dealt with. Nor do I deny a certain perpetual character to the problems that confront us. However, I do mean to deny that problems exist in a vacuum. The problems for which we seek answers are not the problems that occur on a chess board; they are problems of living people in particular historical contexts. Thus it is essential to understand how the problems actually have arisen and do arise for us. Only in this way can we discover if any specific problem with which we are dealing is really a problem, or if it became a problem only on a false assumption and therefore must be reformulated. And only in this way can we be sure that we find solutions which will be applicable to the problems for which they are created. And this kind of understanding cannot be done in a merely passive manner. For just as with theological problems, it is not enough to memorize facts and phrases. This kind of understanding can only be done by an imaginative and creative reproduction of the contexts and consid-

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erations which gave rise to the problems which confront us.*

In recent years there has been much emphasis on education as a process of acquiring technical skills, skills for solving problems. No field of study has totally escaped this emphasis. It is the basic weakness of such an emphasis that it fails to take seriously the fact that skills are but means to ends. Skills are not exercised in a vacuum. They are acquired by people and performed in a context. In no other field has this been as obvious as it has in research in the sciences. True, we have reached a very high standard of living through the skills of the scientists. But at the same time these skills have been directed to the development of greater weapons of destruction. This is a rather awesome indication of the necessity of relating skills, and thus, creativity, to human purposes. And this demands an understanding of just which purposes are human.

We are now in a position to bring the observations that have thus far been made to bear on the problem of education and the weight of history. We have accepted as the aim of Christian education the stimulation of our Christian community, as a whole, to make creative contributions to the culture of the twentieth century. We have noted symptoms which indicate that we are not achieving that goal. Passivity, inertia, apathy — these terms are becoming increasingly applicable to our academic community. But we do wrong, I think, if we fail to recognize that the same symptoms are present throughout the whole of that domain called "academia." It is my opinion that the lack of creativity is not simply the result of pursuing an "understanding" approach rather than a "creating" one. *Rather, I think it is because we have allowed a complete disjunction to come into existence between our creative and our analytic powers.* We have divorced imagination from understanding. We cannot create because we have allowed our creative powers to become nothing more than "technical skills," unrelated to a context embodying human purposes. We cannot create because we have neglected the context necessary for creation to take place. Our failure to create is due to our failure to understand. Our failure to understand is due to our failure to create. Mr. Wolterstorff is correct in recognizing a tension between understanding and creating. We too readily elevate the one above the other in the process of education. Education is only possible, however, where understanding and creating are thoroughly integrated.

And what of the weight of history? "All human life is caught up in process and change. No science, no art, no field of human endeavor, stands still." In the nineteenth century there was an optimism that resulted from viewing this process as identical with the realization of absolute Truth. Each finite moment was viewed as a moment in the life of the Infinite. It was perhaps this view which more than anything else placed such a great sanction on the objective reality and validity of the so-called western Judaeo-Christian tradition. And, indeed, for those holding this view, to understand was to create. It is in the twentieth century that we have discovered once again that the process in which human life is caught up has a genuine finite character; that human creativity bears in it the seeds of its own decay. It is not enough simply to understand, we must be perpetually creating. If we fail to do so, our institutions turn to dust. It is the weight of history that has kept us from seeing this sooner. As a result we feel ourselves bereft of a context in which we can exercise our creative powers.

But if we have been correct in the implications of Christianity for the processes in which human life is involved, it is not our place to despair. A new era of creativity can be ushered in. But this will not happen if we turn from understanding to the bare activity of creating, if we view these as irreconcilable opposites. The immediate task which confronts education, as I see it, is to recover, through creativity, that context which is necessary to all creativity. This can only be done if we discover through creative understanding the continuity which is present in the process in which human life is caught up. Integration of the powers of creative imagination and the powers of analysis, then, is the immediate goal which I propose for education. And this can only be done if we have seen the weight of history.

*It is of interest to note here that Ludwig Wittgenstein, the patron saint of those who call themselves analysts, recognized that essential to the analysis of language is the creation of language-games to be used as models by means of which to carry out analysis.